

**Appn No. 10/736,751
Amendment dated November 2, 2005
Response to Office action of May 2, 2005**

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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1. (previously presented) A microscope comprising:
 - a head portion including an objective;
 - a base portion having a stage mounted thereto;
 - a C-shaped frame connecting the head portion and base portion; and
 - two curvilinear braces connecting the head portion to the base portion.
2. (canceled)
3. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 1, wherein each brace is disposed generally parallel to a vertical optical axis of the microscope.
4. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 1, wherein each brace comprises a composite of different materials or sandwiched layers of different materials.
5. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 1, wherein each brace has a resonant frequency that is not a harmonic or sub-harmonic of the fundamental frequency of vibration of the C-shaped frame.
6. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 1, including means for coupling the two braces together and forcing the braces closer together or further apart, thereby adjusting the distance between the objective and the stage.
7. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 6, wherein a hydraulic cylinder is used to couple the braces together and selectively force the braces closer or further apart.

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8. (currently amended) A ~~Microscope~~ microscope according to claim 6, wherein a piezoelectric strut ~~or a piezoelectric layer in a strut~~ is used to couple the braces together and selectively force the braces closer or further apart.

9. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 1, including means for altering the length of said braces, thereby adjusting the distance between the objective and the stage.

10. (previously presented) A microscope according to claim 9, wherein each brace includes a piezoelectric layer therein for altering the length of the brace.

11. (currently amended) A method of operating a microscope defined according to claim 6 comprising a head portion having an objective mounted thereto and a base portion having a stage mounted thereto, the method comprising:

~~attaching at least one brace between the head portion and the base portion;~~
~~selectively adjusting the distance between the objective and the stage by~~
~~adjusting said means for coupling the two braces together and to force the braces~~
~~closer together or further apart varying the length of the brace along a vertical optical~~
~~axis of the microscope.~~

12. (currently amended) A method of operating a microscope defined according to claim 9 [[11]], including adjusting wherein the length of the each brace along a [[the]] vertical optical axis of the microscope is adjusted by expanding or contracting the overall length of the brace.

13. (currently amended) A method according to claim 12, wherein the each brace includes a piezoelectric layer, the thickness of which can be varied by the application of an applied voltage.

14. (canceled)

15. (canceled)

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16. (canceled)

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (new) A microscope according to claim 6, wherein each brace is disposed generally parallel to a vertical optical axis of the microscope.

20. (new) A microscope according to claim 3, wherein each brace has a resonant frequency that is not a harmonic or sub-harmonic of the fundamental frequency of vibration of the C-shaped frame.

21. (new) A microscope according to claim 20, including means for coupling the two braces together and forcing the braces closer together or further apart, thereby adjusting the distance between the objective and the stage.

22. (new) A microscope according to claim 21, wherein a hydraulic cylinder is used to couple the braces together and selectively force the braces closer or further apart.

23. (new) A microscope according to claim 21, wherein a piezoelectric strut is used to couple the braces together and selectively force the braces closer or further apart.

24. (new) A microscope according to claim 20, including means for altering the length of said braces, thereby adjusting the distance between the objective and the stage.

25. (new) A microscope according to claim 24, wherein each brace includes a piezoelectric layer therein for altering the length of the brace.